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SERVICE

USDA'S REPORT TO CONSUMERS

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE · OFFICE OF INFORMATION · WASHINGTON, D.C. 20250

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No. 41

VACATION TIPS

While You're Away. Vacation bound? Don't forget to get someone to water plants in your indoor planter. Or--if a water boy isn't available--train the plants to get along on their own. Before you are ready to leave, gradually reduce the amount at each watering and water less often. Plants usually can get along satisfactorily by themselves for about two weeks. If you plan to be gone longer--expect some of them to die, especially those in flower.

Wagons, Ho! The cry "Wagons, ho!" once again echoes across the Western plains as covered wagons move out along the old Butterfield Trail. Ranch hands ride point; a Pony Express rider is spotted; and there's the inevitable Indian raid. Three days on the trail--eating, and living the life of the pioneer--provide a novel vacation for Easterners and city folks. In the past two years, Frank Hefner of Quinter, Kans., has organized 13 wagon trains. At first he barely broke even. He did it mostly for fun. He and his wife enjoyed the evening campfires, the square dancing and covered wagon rides as much as their guests. Now they find they are making a small profit--as more and more satisfied "pioneers" tell their friends about the trail West. The Hefners are but one of several hundred American farmers who are turning recreation into a money-making business. A U.S. Department of Agriculture soil conservationist helped the Hefners rediscover the Butterfield Trail which today leads through land owned and rented by 55 different people.

FREEZER FACTS

Beef Buys. You'll find many supermarkets offering good buys in beef this month and next. It's a good time to stock up on select cuts. But before you buy, be sure to check your freezer. Is there room enough to store the meat? According to the U.S. Department of Agriculture, you should figure 1 cubic foot of space for each 30 to 35 pounds of meat.

How Full the Freezer? It costs no more to operate a full freezer than an empty one. Yet USDA finds only about half of those who own freezers keep them even three-fourths full. What do they put in them? About 40 percent of the space is filled with meat; 33 to 36 percent with fruits and vegetables.



OFF THE PRESS

Thrifty Meals. Simple-to-read, easy-to-follow directions for using economical foods in nutritious meals A series of leaflets, designed by the U.S. Department of Agriculture, specifically for low-income families, now tells these families how to use the donated food they receive from welfare agencies as well as that purchased at the grocery store. The recipes use no more than six ingredients, require a minimum of utensils and no more than six steps of preparation. The 21 nutrition-recipe leaflets come in a teaching kit that also contains a "Daily Food Guide" poster. The kit (USDA-Packet B) is available from the Superintendent of Documents, Government Printing Office, Washington, D.C. 20402. The cost: \$1.50.

Gardener, Spare That Bee. Honey bees are not pests, so apply that pesticide carefully. The U.S. Department of Agriculture urges home gardeners to follow these simple rules to protect honey bees. (1) Apply granules or sprays rather than dusts. (2) Treat plants before or after flowering--at night or at a time of day when bees are not present. (3) And probably most important, know your pesticides and apply those the least hazardous to bees. A new leaflet entitled "Protecting Honey Bees from Pesticides" lists those that are hazardous, moderately hazardous, and relatively non-hazardous. For a free copy send a postcard with your name and address to the Office of Information, U.S. Department of Agriculture, Washington, D.C. 20250.

My Dog Has Fleas. And if yours does too, look out. They may seek a change in menu--and it may be you. Any flea that lives on animals will bite people. A new bulletin of the U.S. Department of Agriculture gives the low-down on five kinds of fleas that attack pets, people and livestock. It explains how to kill fleas on dogs and cats and in your home. For a copy of "Controlling Fleas," HG-121, send a nickel to the Superintendent of Documents, U.S. Government Printing Office, Washington, D.C. 20402. Be sure to include your zip code.

RESEARCH RESULTS

Starched Paper. Extra strong paper can be made from a derivative of ordinary cornstarch, mixed with wood pulp. U.S. Department of Agriculture scientists find. But you won't be buying it at your stationery store. This paper will be used to make linerboard--the paper that surrounds the ripple in corrugated cardboard boxes. The new process almost doubles the strength of dry linerboard. Wet linerboard that has been treated with the cornstarch derivative has 15 times the strength of linerboard made without it. For consumers this will mean added protection to the products you buy.

That's Oil. Celery leaves, ribs and cull stalks that formerly went into the waste bin are now being used to make celery oil that has a better aroma and is 10 times more potent than oil produced from celery seed. The process was developed by U.S. Department of Agriculture scientists at Winter Haven, Fla.

Neck Rests for Pears. Before long, pears may be appearing in your supermarket lying luxuriously in divided trays with neck rests. The U.S. Department of Agriculture has developed the trays. Industry has only to use them. Overwrapped with a tight plastic film, tray-packed pears make the trip to market in excellent condition. And though they cost 1 1/2 cents per pound more than currently used methods, at least this much money is saved by the retailer in his packaging operation. So you, the consumer, can expect this special handling--and better quality pears--without any extra cost to you. You'll also be finding other perishable products making the trip to market in special tailor-made trays.

FOOD FACTS

Loaded Formulas. When buying diet supplements, don't go on the theory that if a little is good, more is better. 'Taint so, say U.S. Department of Agriculture nutritionists. It does no good to buy vitamin pills with percentages well above daily requirements. The body can absorb only certain amounts of the essential elements. Any extra (with the exception of vitamins A and D) are simply not used. In any case, your best bet is to consult first with your doctor.

Pick the Plentifuls. Put eggs on your grocery list often in May. There are lots of them, and they're an especially good buy. Also appearing on the May Plentiful Foods List of the U.S. Department of Agriculture are: orange juice, beef and potatoes. In June there'll still be good supplies of eggs, orange juice, beef and potatoes plus dry beans, milk and dairy products.

Put Eggs in Your Basket. When you shop for eggs, look for the USDA grademark. This indicates quality. Within each grade, there are also sizes. In most recipes, an egg is an egg. But for your information, it takes 7 small eggs to make a cupful; 6 mediums; 5 large; 4 extra large eggs.

More for Less. It's true. There are "economies of scale" in raising a family. Figure the cost of feeding a child for 18 years. According to the latest survey of food expenditures conducted by the U.S. Departments of Agriculture and Labor, a single child consumes \$5,726 in food in 18 years. With four to five children in the family, the same food may be served for \$800 less per child--or, \$4,908 each.

High Pressured. Moving to a high altitude? Don't forget to adjust your recipes--and remember, altitude also makes a difference in pressure cooking. According to the U.S. Department of Agriculture, it takes 10 pounds of pressure for a pressure cooker at sea level to reach 240° F., the temperature required for processing meats and most vegetables. But one additional pound of pressure is needed for each 2,000 feet above sea level. This means at 10,000 feet, you'd need 15 pounds of pressure to get 240°.

The Fat Calf. From bullets to beef--that's the evolution about to take place on the Nebraska prairie. The 35,000-acre Naval Ammunition Depot near Hastings is being turned into a huge meat animal research center. Here U.S. Department of Agriculture scientists will trim down and shape up hogs, sheep and cattle. The aim is to produce animals with more meat and less fat. Today, some 20 percent of U.S. Choice beef never makes it to the dinner table. It's sliced off as unused fat--by the meat cutter, the butcher, and you, the housewife. The scientists hope to cut this waste to 5 percent.

THE SHOE DEPARTMENT

30,000 Steps a Day. How often do you think a 7-year-old boy needs a new pair of shoes? According to the U.S. Department of Agriculture yearbook "Consumers All," the active life of a pair of shoes ranges from 20 days to 9 months; the average, about 10 weeks. That's because that small boy (who probably weighs about 55 pounds) puts 800 tons of weight on his shoes every day--in walking some 30,000 steps. But a boy does more than walk. He jumps, kicks, scuffs, and wades through puddles. New leather processing methods, developed by U.S. Department of Agriculture scientists, make shoes, jackets and similar products resistant to water, perspiration, acids, alkalis and detergents.

A Good Fit. Don't ask for shoes by size. Ask the clerk to measure both feet. Have your child stand with his weight evenly divided between feet. The foot alters slightly in length and width when it takes the body's weight.

REGULATION

In the Soup. It's all set! Beginning Sept. 1, chicken soup must contain at least 2 percent chicken--or it can't be called "chicken" soup. The same goes for turkey soup, and all other poultry soups. For almost three years, the U.S. Department of Agriculture has sought this designation as a requirement under its Federal poultry inspection program. On April 10, the U.S. Supreme Court refused to hear a final appeal by the Borden Company.

HOUSE AND YARD

Grasses--for Sun and Shade. Before you buy grass seed, consider the climate in your area and whether the grass will grow in sun or shade. The U.S. Department of Agriculture recommends these grasses for shady areas--red fescue, rough bluegrass and St. Augustine grass; for sunny spots--bentgrass, Kentucky bluegrass; bermudagrass and carpetgrass.

Gardening on a Grand Scale. Fixing up your yard--and complaining about the work? Think of the work that goes into keeping up the National Forests. It's a truly big job. Instead of a flit gun, the U.S. Department of Agriculture uses planes to control insect pests. Instead of clipping or pulling out unwanted stems, it injects a chemical to do the job. Instead of pruning with shears, it uses saws. Instead of birdbaths, it builds ponds. And instead of garden paths, it has almost 200,000 miles of roads and some 100,000 miles of trails. This garden, too, is yours to enjoy. Visit it this summer. There's a National Forest within a day's drive of your home.

Ready for Summer's Heat? You can't rebuild your house to beat the heat, but there are several additions you can make to keep out the heat. Housing experts at the U.S. Department of Agriculture suggest louvers or bar screens. On a south window, these can reduce direct solar heat 90 percent. Add awnings. Those with open sides are best. Inside, install venetian blinds. They'll cut the heat another 25 to 50 percent. Plant a few trees and large shrubs if your house is mechanically cooled. Otherwise don't. They may block the breeze.

Death on Schedule. Out to kill cockroaches and houseflies? All right, synchronize your watches and at 4 p.m., spray! Repeated tests made over a two-year period by USDA scientists show that more roaches and flies are killed by an insecticide sprayed at this time of day than at any other time. Evidently, the insects' vulnerability fluctuates with their daily activities. Flies appear to be most active and roaches to be starting their most active period in late afternoon. This then is their most vulnerable period.

RURAL OPPORTUNITY.

No Wait for Waitresses. Tourism is big business in Berkshire County, Mass. It brings in \$52 million annually. To capitalize on this business boom and to support the rural community, the Extension home economist offered a course for waitresses. Ninety-five women showed up for the five two-hour sessions. All were not new waitresses either. Several restaurants sent their employees to attend. The course stressed not only serving techniques but also the importance of meeting the public. It explained public health laws. It gave many otherwise-unemployed women a chance to add to their families' income and provided local businesses with much-needed trained help.

For information about items in this issue, write: Jeanne S. Park, Editor, SERVICE, Office of Information, U.S. Department of Agriculture, Washington, D.C. 20250.